

PRAYER VENTURES FOR DECEMBER 2021

1 *World AIDS Day* Join in prayer with our siblings around the world to remember all in our communities who have been and continue to be affected by HIV and AIDS. Pledge to God that we will work together to raise awareness and recommit ourselves and the church to a faithful and dedicated response.

2 Give thanks for Advent wreaths and other faith traditions that remember and celebrate God's dwelling among us in Jesus, God's gift of eternal life, and Jesus' enduring presence and light in the world and within us.

3 *International Day of Persons with Disabilities* Pray that we will grow stronger and more aware in our church's commitment to seek full inclusion and equitable participation of all people within the life of society and the church, embracing the whole person — abilities, questions, life experiences, complexities and all.

4 "Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation" (Psalm 25:5). Pray that God will be patient with us as we strive to be faithful followers and students of Christ; ask the Spirit to stir our hunger for understanding the word of God and reveal its implications for our daily lives.

5 Pray that we will be eager to share the gospel and will welcome the Spirit to use our gifts, abilities, insights and life experiences to prepare the way for others to believe in Christ.

6 Give thanks for the opportunities provided by the new ELCA Good Gifts catalog to respond generously to the unique needs and priorities of congregations, companion churches and partners — close to home and around the world.

7 Pray for congregations in your community and for ELCA congregations and ministries across the country, that we will thrive in our witness and service and will encourage one another in doing God's work in the world.

8 Pray for our global companions and our companion synods as we journey together during Advent, drawing on our diverse traditions and practices to focus on the coming of Jesus, the gift of salvation and our unity in the body of Christ.

9 Praise God for looking upon us with mercy and love, for liberating us from the consequences of human weakness and sin, and for restoring our relationship as children of God.

10 Reflect on your hopes and what you anticipate as a child of God; express them to God and thank God for accompanying us in times of waiting and anticipation

and for remaining faithful to the promises God has made to us.

11 Give thanks for how our siblings in Christ observe and celebrate Advent, Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ in diverse cultures. Pray that these rich and meaningful traditions, practices and perspectives will deepen our understanding and appreciation of the gift and good news of Jesus Christ — God's sacrificial expression of love and mercy.

12 Pray that, through the work of the Spirit in us, every aspect of our life will manifest the good fruits of love, generosity, justice, peace, service and faithfulness to the word of God.

13 Pray for congregations and youth ministry leaders who are making decisions about participating in the ELCA Youth Gathering and for those who have decided to attend and are beginning to prepare for their faith-building experience.

14 Remember in prayer seafarers and fishermen of all nations whose work separates them from family, friends and community for long periods of time. Pray that they will be uplifted and sustained by the assurance that they are remembered, valued, loved and always connected with their siblings in Christ, everywhere.

15 Pray that we will be filled with "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) and that our most burdensome worries, concerns and anxieties will be calmed and diminished.

16 Las Posadas ("The Inns"), a tradition observed in Latin America and in some congregations in our country, remembers and reenacts the journey of Mary and Joseph seeking shelter just before the birth of Jesus. Give thanks for his birth and remember in prayer refugees, immigrants and people everywhere who are homeless and seek shelter, rest, sanctuary and hope.

17 Living in the promise and reality of the new covenant God has made with us in Jesus Christ, remember in prayer the words of Isaiah: "I will give thanks to you, O Lord, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, and you comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation" (Isaiah 12:1-2).

18 *International Migrants Day* Pray for our siblings who are refugees and immigrants around the world, in our country and at our borders. Ask the Spirit to fill us with generosity and renew our commitment to justice, compassion and empathy, recognizing both our unique

needs and our common desire for safety and security, the best for our children and families, meaningful and life-sustaining employment, caring communities, opportunities to use our gifts and skills, and mutual acceptance and respect as children of God.

19 Rejoice in God our Savior, who shows us love and mercy and attends to the needs of people who are poor, hungry, ill, neglected or excluded by society. Pray that God will work through us, using our unique gifts and passions to respond to, serve and embrace our neighbors in need while respecting their dignity.

20 *Katharina von Bora Luther (1499-1552)*

Remember and give thanks for the witness, leadership and service of women who help strengthen our faith, share the gospel, grow and provide leadership for the church, deepen our understanding of Scripture, and serve neighbors in need around the world.

21 *Winter solstice* As the days get shorter in our hemisphere, pray for people of all ages who suffer depression and loneliness, especially during the holiday season; pray that they will be comforted and uplifted by their faith and the knowledge that God is ever-present and sees our suffering, loneliness and despair; and ask the Spirit to help us be attentive, caring and empathetic friends and siblings in Christ for one another.

22 Pray that God will hear and attend to our every prayer — spoken or silent, individual or communal — and that God will restore us, strengthen our faith, guide our lives and help us respond to perplexing problems in our communities and the world.

23 Let our prayers echo Mary's song of praise for God's power, presence and life-giving activity in the world, and for looking upon humanity with undeserved love and mercy and blessing us with the promised messiah, Jesus Christ.

24 *Christmas Eve* What an awesome gift has been given to us in the birth of a tiny, unassuming baby — the son of God, our true Savior and the redeemer of the world. "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14)!

25 *Christmas Day* Sing and shout prayers of thanksgiving and praise to God for living among us in the person of Jesus to help us experience and understand the good news of God's saving grace, truth and amazing love for humankind and all creation. Again, we say, "Glory to God in the highest!"

26 Pray that our life together in the church and as siblings in Christ will help us mature in faith, understand God's word and ways, face the challenges

of daily life, serve our neighbor and be confident in inviting others to believe and have faith in Jesus.

27 Kwanzaa begins this week. Give thanks to God for the richness and significance of the traditions, cultures, values, stories, faith and leadership of our siblings of African descent.

28 Let us join earth and the heavens in praising God, from whom all things are brought into being and imbued with life and purpose.

29 Pray that our lives will shine brightly with the love and mercy God has shown us, so that we are clear witnesses to the gospel and bold and unconstrained in serving our neighbors in need who yearn for hope, relief and good news.

30 In a world where anger, vengeance, division, impatience and self-interest are all too familiar, pray that we embrace together the freedom, new self and purpose that we have received in baptism, so that we, too, will take to heart the words of encouragement Paul wrote to the Christians in Colossae: "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love" (Colossians 3:12-14).

31 *New Year's Eve* Give thanks that we are new creations in Jesus Christ and that we can begin each day of every year with hope, renewed faith and restored vision for the work that God calls us to do in the world.